

The Empire and Christianity

353

stateliness of Minerva, the beauty of Venus, and the bountifulness of Ceres, were all treacherous delusions and masks of sin, and all equally pernicious to the soul, found in the very charm of style and the seductiveness of language of the old poetry another reason for keeping it out of the hands of their children and for themselves eschewing its dangerous delights. It is difficult to blame them. Protestants and Catholics even of the present day are studiously ignorant of the special literatures of the other, and if the Christian eschewed the classical poets, the educated pagan was grotesquely ignorant of the Christian's "Holy Books."*

But this point must not be pursued too far. Education itself was based on the ancient literature of Greece and Rome—there was, indeed, nothing else on which to base it—and in the ablest and most cultured of the Christian writers the influence of the classical authors is evident on every Page. Jerome dreamt that an angel came to rebuke him for his love of the rounded periods of Cicero—Ciceronianus es, non Christianus. Augustine bewails the tears he had wasted on the moving story of the Fall of Troy, while his heart was insensible to the sufferings of the Son of God. Lines and half lines from Virgil, or the choice of a Virgilian epithet, betray the ineradicable influence of the Mantuan over Ambrose. Even the author of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*^ despite his ferocious hatred of paganism, takes evident pleasure in the Ciceronian flavour of his maledictions. Do what he would, the cultured and educated Christian